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General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

Official Records

121st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 16 July 1996, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

Floods and storms in Bangladesh, China, Guyana and Yemen

The President: May I, on behalf of all the members of the General Assembly, extend our deepest sympathy to the Governments and the peoples of Bangladesh, China, Guyana and Yemen for the tragic loss of lives and extensive material damage which have resulted from recent floods.

May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

I now call on the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Ziauddin (Bangladesh): On behalf of the Government and the people of Bangladesh, I wish to thank you most profoundly, Sir, for your kind words of sympathy and condolence at the recent flood in Bangladesh. I also take this opportunity to express gratitude to the Secretary-General for his appeal to Member States to offer aid and assistance to alleviate the suffering of our distressed people.

Flood waters in five northern districts of Bangladesh have inundated large areas. They have destroyed food and cash crops across more than 50,000 acres. At least 12 people have tragically drowned; thousands of people have become homeless; and more than 1 million have been affected in one way or another.

The situation is still worsening. New areas are being inundated, as the water level of the two major rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Ganges, rises. As a consequence, the need for shelters, medical assistance and relief for the people is increasing. Once the present flood situation is over, the task of rehabilitating the destitute will be put in full swing.

At present, the Government of Bangladesh and concerned national agencies have been striving hard to mobilize adequate manpower and resources to mitigate the suffering of the affected people. People are working around the clock without rest or respite to provide succour and assistance to the flood victims.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly that the Government of Bangladesh has so far had the good fortune of being able to control the present situation by itself. The resilience of our people has enabled the Government to deal with the grim situation more easily than expected.

On behalf of the people and the Government of Bangladesh I wish to express our deepest gratitude to you, Sir, to the Secretary-General, and to all States Members of the United Nations for rallying round Bangladesh in offering generous support at this very difficult hour.

The President: I now call on the representative of China.

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Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Mr. President, you have just expressed sympathy to China for the floods that have taken place. The Chinese delegation is very much moved by your comments and, on behalf of the Chinese Government, we would like to express our gratitude to you. We believe that your words will provide great support to our flood-stricken people, and will encourage them to overcome the problems caused by the flooding and rebuild their homes.

Some eleven provinces in China have recently been flooded, of which four have had serious problems. Recent statistics show that about 400 people have lost their lives, and hundreds of thousands of people have left their homes. The costs exceed 10 billion renminbi, or more than $1.2 billion. The Chinese Government is trying to mobilize our people to overcome the problems caused by the flood. The Members of the United Nations have extended their sympathy to China, and some countries have already offered assistance. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Member States who have given their support.

The President: I now call on the representative of Guyana.

Mr. Insanally (Guyana): It was very kind and thoughtful of you, Sir, to refer to the disaster which recently struck our country. The heavy rains and flooding which have occurred over the past few months represent a severe blow to our economy and a threat to the health and safety of our citizens. Not only have crops and livestock been destroyed, but there is also the very real danger of an outbreak of disease. A state of national emergency has been declared.

The Government is doing all in its power to cope with the situation, and we are grateful for the prompt intervention of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, and all others who have provided much-needed relief. We would, however, welcome the continued generous assistance of the international community, since conditions are likely to worsen in the days ahead.

Again, I thank the Assembly for its expression of sympathy and support. At the same time my delegation extends its condolences to other sister States — Bangladesh, China and Yemen — which have suffered similar misfortunes.

The President: I now call on the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Obadi (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and the people and leaders of Yemen, to express our appreciation and gratitude for the kind words you addressed to us in connection with the floods that Yemen has recently endured. I would also like to thank the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and all the humanitarian organizations and friendly and brotherly Governments for their backing and support of the people of Yemen. They have made efforts to come to the aid of the Yemeni people at this difficult time, and to bring emergency assistance.

According to Department of Humanitarian Affairs Situation Report number 6 of 4 July, the damage has dealt a severe blow to Yemen's economy and constitutes a humanitarian disaster. The figures cited in that report provide evidence of this: 124,000 people have been affected; 324 people have been killed; 108 are missing; and more than 3,770 families have been forced to leave their homes. Crops have been destroyed and 13,000 head of livestock are missing. More than 37,000 fruit trees, 1,335 other trees, 34 generators, over 1,000 pumps, 1,068 kilometres of road surface and 38 schools have been destroyed. According to Yemeni authorities, these are only preliminary estimates of the damage. Further damage may yet come to light.

We thank the organizations and Governments that are helping Yemen, in this hour of need, to rebuild everything that was destroyed by the torrential rains and floods in order to reconstruct our infrastructure.

Agenda item 8 ***(continued)***

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Request for the reopening of agenda 24 (Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s)

Letter from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations (A/50/996)

The President: Document A/50/996 contains a letter dated 10 July 1996 from the Permanent

Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to me.

In his letter, the Permanent Representative of Belgium informed me that the organizational session of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which he chaired at my request, decided, *inter alia*, to conduct the mid-term review starting from 16 September 1996. As the fifty-first session of the General Assembly will be opened on 17 September 1996, the organizational session decided to recommend to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session that the Ad Hoc Committee meet during the Assembly's fifty-first session and, for that purpose, to recommend that the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee for the period set out in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 50/160 be extended for the conduct of the mid-term review.

In view of the foregoing, the Permanent Representative of Belgium requests that the discussion of agenda item 24, entitled "Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", be reopened in order to consider the draft resolution annexed to the letter contained in document A/50/996.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to reopen consideration of agenda item 24?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to point out that, by considering the draft resolution annexed to the letter from the Permanent Representative of Belgium contained in document A/50/996, the Assembly will be reconsidering the decision taken by the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of its resolution 50/160 of 22 December 1995.

In order for the Assembly to take up any other recommendation in that regard, it must first agree, under rule 81 of its rules of procedure, to reconsider the relevant provisions contained in paragraph 6 of resolution 50/160.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to reconsider the relevant provisions of paragraph 6 of resolution 50/160?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed to the consideration of agenda item 24 as the last item of the meeting this morning?

It was so decided.

Request for the reopening of agenda item 40 (Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal) (A/50/997)

The President: Document A/50/997 contains a solemn appeal I made on 11 July 1996 in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce. In order for the General Assembly to take note of the solemn appeal, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of agenda item 40.

May I take it that the General Assembly has no objection to reopening consideration of agenda item 40?

It was so decided.

The President: I will now read out the solemn appeal in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce.

"On 7 November 1995, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/13, by which it called upon Member States to reaffirm the observance of the Olympic Truce during each Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

"The Olympic Truce, or *ekecheria*, is based on an ancient Greek tradition, dating back to the ninth century B.C. All conflicts ceased during the period of the Truce, which began seven days prior to the opening of the Olympic Games and ended on the seventh day following the closing of the Games, so that athletes, artists, their relatives and pilgrims could travel safely to the Olympic Games and afterwards return to their countries.

"Valiant attempts have consistently been made by the United Nations in an effort to bring peace and stability to the troubled regions of the world. Still new concepts are needed for dealing with strife.

"I solemnly appeal to all States to observe the Olympic Truce during the games of the XXVI Olympiad, the Centennial Games, to be held at

Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America, from 19 July to 4 August, and to strive towards building lasting peace, whether or not they are now parties to a confrontation. I urge us all to place at the forefront of our thoughts and actions the principles and ideals which the *ekecheria* and the Olympic Movement seek to propagate. By applying the principle of the *ekecheria*, the world can at least hope for some respite, however temporary, from the killing and destruction which accompany conflict. I therefore appeal to those now engaged in armed struggles to uphold this principle and suspend hostilities in keeping with its observance."

Mr. Illueca (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the fact that the General Assembly at its fiftieth session is returning to agenda item 40, "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal". This item has always been of interest to my delegation; that interest is the expression of the value we place on sport as an activity that has redeeming virtues in a world beset by the problems and ills well known to us all: drugs, violence, terrorism, crime, nihilism and despair, which go hand in hand with hunger, unemployment, oppression and lack of opportunity.

On behalf of my Government, I reiterate that interest, and at the same time I express Panama's support and recognition for the solemn appeal made by the President of the General Assembly concerning the observance of the Olympic Truce. The decision to place on record our support and recognition is based on the fact that the games of the XXVI Olympiad will be taking place soon in Atlanta, from 19 July to 4 August 1996 — that is, in the next few days.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its hope that the games of the XXVI Olympiad will not merely unfold, but will also have a significance that will mark the history of the late twentieth century with values and emotions that can help humanity to achieve high scores in truth, tolerance, sympathy, freedom, serenity and democracy.

Panama joins the entire international community in its excitement at the forthcoming Olympiad. My delegation joins the international community in recognizing that sporting activities represent the striving of human beings to improve and challenge themselves and to rise above their own limitations in order to set an example of civic virtue.

To all athletes, to the authorities of the world Olympic Movement and to the local authorities that have organized the Olympic Games, we express our gratitude. For us, the States Members of the United Nations, the observance of the Olympic Truce will be a symbol of the goal to which we are committed through our ongoing efforts: peace and solidarity as the ultimate objectives of humanity's aspirations.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to take note of the solemn appeal in connection with the observance of the Olympic Truce?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 40?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 24 ***(continued)***

Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s

Draft resolution A/50/L.75

The President: I should like once again to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the letter dated 11 July 1996, circulated as document A/50/996, addressed to me by the Permanent Representative of Belgium, which contains in its annex a draft resolution. The draft resolution has now been distributed to all members of the General Assembly as document A/50/L.75.

I call on the representative of Belgium to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.75.

Mr. Reyn (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): At your request, Sir, I had the honour to preside on 20 June over the organizational session of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

In its resolution 50/160 of 22 December 1995, the General Assembly decided to convene an organizational session of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the New Agenda to consider and adopt the necessary arrangements for its work. The results of that session are described in

the Committee's report in document A/AC.251/3 of 28 June 1996.

At its organizational session, aside from electing its officers, the Committee established two working groups: for the assessment of national efforts and for the response of the international community and the necessary measures to accelerate and improve the implementation of the New Agenda. The Committee also took note of the documentation that would be made available for the conduct of the mid-term review and, at the same time, took a decision concerning the participation of non-governmental organizations.

As to the date of the mid-term review, the Ad Hoc Committee decided to conduct it starting on 16 September 1996 and recommends to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session that the Ad Hoc Committee meet during the Assembly's fifty-first session and, for that purpose, that the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee for the period set out in paragraph 6 of resolution 50/160 be extended.

It is in this context that I submit the text of draft resolution A/50/L.75 for the General Assembly's approval.

Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe): During my chairmanship of the African Group for the month of June, I had the honour to present the views of our Group on the question of the meetings to take place in September of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. It was the Group's request that the meetings of the Ad Hoc Committee commence on 16 September.

My delegation would therefore wish to support the request made by the Permanent Representative of Belgium, who chaired the organizational session, at which the present request was unanimously supported. I therefore wish to express the hope that draft resolution A/50/L.75, submitted by the delegation of Belgium, will be adopted by the General Assembly.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should now like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding immediately to consider the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.75. In this connection, as the draft resolution has only just been circulated, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objections, I will take it that the Assembly agrees with this proposal.

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/50/L.75. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/50/L.75 was adopted (resolution 50/160 B).

The President: We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 24.

Organization of work

The President: I should like to make an announcement concerning the Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace.

Members will recall that at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, an Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace was established and the President of the Assembly designated the Permanent Representative of Spain, His Excellency Mr. Juan Antonio Yáñez-Barnuevo, its Vice-Chairman. Members will further recall that the Informal Open-ended Working Group was reconvened during the forty-ninth session and that the President of the Assembly again designated Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo Vice-Chairman of the Group.

Since Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo has now returned to his country, he will no longer be available to serve as Vice-Chairman of the working group.

In this regard, following the necessary consultations, I am designating the Permanent Representative of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Hans Jacob Biørn Lian, to assume the vice-chairmanship of the Informal Open-ended Working Group on an Agenda for Peace. I should like to take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Assembly, Ambassador Yáñez-Barnuevo for the invaluable contribution he has provided to this very important working group.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.